

## **A teacher's perspective by Jancys-Blue-Bayou**

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**Summary:** Mr. Clarke reflects on his past and present students as he organizes the Snow Ball, with help from Nancy and Jonathan. Mr. Clarke POV feat. Jancy and all the kids.

## A teacher's perspective

He sighed as he made his way across the parking lot to his car. He felt a little frustrated. It was the same thing every year. Everyone agreed that the Snow Ball was important to the kids, but no one wanted to step up and take on the responsibility of being head organizer, so as usual it eventually fell to him to get it done. Even though he'd never been much for dances when he himself was young he knew how important it was for the kids, and so he couldn't say no. At least he'd managed to book the DJ last night. But the lack of volunteers to chaperone was a worry.

"Mr. Clarke!" A female voice called out as he opened his car door. Turning around he saw Nancy Wheeler walking towards him, hand in hand with Jonathan Byers.

Well, that was certainly new. Not that he kept up with who of his former students were dating who, but he hadn't heard either of their little brothers mention this, neither in class or in AV Club. They made a cute couple, he decided quickly. He had always had a soft spot for Nancy. She'd been a smart, hard-working and curious student, and her little brother was the same way. Jonathan on the other hand hadn't said a thing in class unless he was called upon, but always did very well on tests, almost as good as Nancy. He chalked it up to shyness, which there was nothing wrong about. His little brother was much the same way although more talkative as he had his group of friends. Come to think of it, he couldn't really remember seeing Jonathan hang out with any other student before. He did however remember seeing him work menial jobs at Melvad's and then The Hawk for years now. He didn't know a lot about the Byers home life, he wasn't the one to pry and certainly not the one to pay attention to gossip, especially after all that happened last autumn, though he knew that their father hadn't been in the picture for a long time. Jonathan was probably forced to grow up pretty fast, he reasoned.

"Nancy, Jonathan. What can I do for you?"

"Well, it's more the opposite," Nancy began. "We heard that you're organizing the Snow Ball again and was wondering if you need any volunteers?"

"Really?" This was a surprise, and a relief.

"Yeah! I can help out with whatever, and if you need a photographer, Jonathan's your guy," Nancy elaborated.

"Well that would actually be great," he answered. Jonathan had a camera slung over his shoulder as always. "We'd reimburse you for the film of course. You'd be taking portraits mostly, but if you could get some other shots aswell for the yearbook I know that would be appreciated."

"Sure," Jonathan answered.

"Great! Well if you could be there an hour before it starts to help with preparations?"

"Sure thing Mr. Clarke," Nancy answered and the teens looked ready to leave. But he felt he had to acknowledge something.

"Oh and Nancy. I'm so sorry about Barbara. I know you two were close. It was just awful to read about."

"Y-yeah. Thanks," Nancy looked down and then up and seemed to instinctively draw closer to Jonathan.

"She was a really good student. You both were. Sorry, I just wanted to offer my condolences."

"No, thank you. Thanks a lot. I'll see you!"

"Take care, thanks for helping out!"

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"Sorry we're late, we had to help E-, uh someone," Nancy got out in a rush as she pushed through the doors with Jonathan in tow.

"No worries, thanks again for volunteering guys," he answered, beckoning them both to follow him inside the gym. "You see we thought we'd do the portraits down there, Jonathan, where we put the backdrop, if you'd like to set up your camera. You can adjust everything as you see fit of course."

"Sure."

"And Nancy, I thought you could take care of the punch? And run that table during the dance. Everything's still in the kitchen, I think the cups are there too."

"Absolutely," Nancy answered and headed off.

Somehow they get everything ready in time. He seats himself at the admission table just in time as the kids start to file in. After almost an hour the first faces from his trusty AV Club show up.

"Michael, Lucas, looking very sharp tonight."

"Hey Mr. Clarke, thanks."

"Is Will or Dustin here yet?" Michael asks.

"No not yet."

"Is Max?" Lucas asks eagerly.

He smiled, it had surprised him somewhat that the new girl Maxine had become such fast friends with that pretty closed off unit that he was so fond of.

"Haven't seen her either yet. You guys should head inside, get some punch from Nancy," he suggests. Michael grimaces but they shuffle inside.

It's only a couple of minutes later when Will arrives.

"Young Mr. Byers!" He greets cheerily.

"Hi Mr. Clarke," Will smiles, looking in good spirits which pleases him. Since the strange events last autumn when Will had been missing and then presumed dead after misidentification at the morgue and subsequently found alive, the smart and polite young boy had seemed a bit more withdrawn. He'd missed some school about a month ago, but since then had seemed to be in a much better mood, as happy as before everything that happened.

"Michael and Lucas just arrived, they were asking for you," he let's him know.

"Cool, I'll go on in then."

Soon after that the new girl Maxine, or Max as he's been sure to call her since she prefers it, arrives, saying hello before heading inside to find the boys.

Dustin, with his spectacular entrance, is one of the last to arrive. A few more late-arrivals come in after and then he's just about ready to close down and go help out inside when the door opens again. In walks a girl he doesn't recognize, though there's something vaguely familiar about her face. He let's her in and follows shortly thereafter.

He surveys the dance floor as he walks inside the gym. He sees Lucas and Max dancing, Will dancing, and Mike dancing with the mysterious girl. Looking over to the side he sees Jonathan running the punch table.

"Where's Nancy?" He walks over and asks.

"Out there," Jonathan nods out to the dance floor, a small smile on his lips.

Looking around further he sees Nancy dancing with Dustin.

"Oh. That's nice of her."

"Yeah. Uh, do you know the girl who's dancing with Will?"

"Yes, that's Caroline Keller. Nice girl," he informs him.

"Alright."

"I've got this section covered if you want to head back to your station."

"Oh, sure," Jonathan answers and goes back to his camera.

Several songs later Nancy returns, Dustin now sitting talking with Will, who was also apparently done with dancing.

"So sorry Mr. Clarke, I just-" she starts to apologize so he stops her.

"No worries Nancy, Jonathan covered for you. That was really nice of you, to dance with Dustin."

"Oh. Well. He's such a sweet kid."

Nancy takes over the punch table again. He spends the rest of the dance going from station to station, pitching in and helping out where it's needed. It all goes smoothly. Eventually the DJ calls out that it's time for the last dance. He's running snacks next to Nancy at the moment, chatting with Dustin and Will who's come over to replenish. At the DJ's cue Stacy Miller walks over.

"Hey, Dustin," she starts, grabbing his attention. "Do... you want to dance?"

Dustin looks surprised and seems to think it over before answering.

"No thanks."

Stacy looks shocked, and he thinks he knows why, he's not so clueless that he doesn't know that in the social hierarchy at the school, Stacy is one of the more popular girls while Dustin and his friends in the AV Club are further down the latter. The girl looks infuriated from Dustin to Nancy, who does a bad job of hiding a smirk, before leaving in a huff. Dustin smiles and nods to Nancy before he and Will go back to their table.

He can see Nancy taking several long looks at Jonathan, who by now has stopped with the portraits to instead get some shots of the dance floor for the yearbook.

"Hey, you should go," he starts, she looks over at him. "To him. I'll cover this."

"Thanks," Nancy smiles and walks up to Jonathan and taps him on the shoulder. She says something that makes him blush and look down at his feet, but then he's putting away his camera and leading her by the hand to the edges of the dance floor.

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Nancy, Jonathan and the few other chaperones help him clean up afterwards, though he eventually loses track of the first two. He's the last one to leave as he's the one with the keys to lock up. All in all a good evening, he thinks as he locks the doors to the gym and then walks down the hallway towards the exit.

He hears sounds as he walks further down the dimly lit corridor. Unmistakable sounds. He was young once too. He clears his throat which has the desired effect. Nancy jumps away from Jonathan who was pinned with his back against the wall.

"Ahem, excuse but I have to lock up here so if you could take that somewhere else..."

"Yes, sorry Mr. Clarke!" A redfaced Nancy gets out. She grabs the mortified Jonathan and heads for the exit. He follows them a couple of steps back.

"Thanks again for helping out tonight," he says as they walk outside.

"No problem," Nancy answers quickly without looking at him. "Goodnight Mr. Clarke."

"Goodnight," he answers. As they start to walk away he can't resist but to call after them: "Please remember Biology class!"